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House of Representatives SUPPORTING RESTORATION OF THE SALTON SEA!

HON. BOB FILNER
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MR. FILNER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to engage in a colloquy with the gentleman from California (Mr. Calvert), the chairman, on an issue which I would hope to have seen more about in this bill, and that is the restoration of the Salton Sea.

As we know, an earlier version of the bill provided for a feasibility study and \$300 million in restoration funds. We all know about the importance of the Salton Sea in our ecology and in our economy. It is critical for the Pacific flyway for migratory birds, as well as the Colorado River's delta, and is home to a variety of wildlife, including fish, birds, microbes, and wetlands species. The sea also provides many recreational opportunities such as camping, bird watching, fishing, boating, hiking, hunting, and off-roading.

If the sea were no longer able to support life, it would cause irreparable harm to Southern California's ecosystem and economy.

The Salton Sea lies mostly in my district in Southern California. It is the third largest saline lake in the nation, and the largest inland body of water west of the Rockies. The Sea is an important natural resource, one that is valued not only by residents of the area, but also by the

many who come from around the country to enjoy its bounty.

The Salton Sea does not have an outlet to keep the water fresh, so as water evaporates from the saline lake, the salt left behind continues to concentrate. As the salinity of the Sea continues to rise, and the environmental quality continues to decline, it will no longer be able to support life and will begin to die. If that were to happen, it will cause irreparable harm to Southern California's ecosystem and economy.

The surrounding areas of the Coachella and Imperial Valleys rely on the Sea to support their agricultural and recreational economies. I share the concerns of many about what might occur if the elevation of the Sea drops, becomes too saline to support fish or birds, and further impairs air quality due to blowing sediment.

The Salton Sea is also an essential link in increasing and diversifying our domestic water resources, and therefore needs funding for restoration. A recently signed federal water transfer agreement between Southern California water agencies will reduce flows to the Salton Sea. While the water transfer will assist Southern California in staying within its

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Colorado River water allocation, inflows to the Sea may be reduced dramatically. With that diminished amount of inflow, the Salton Sea presents a particularly difficult challenge in protecting and restoring it, while at the same time reducing California's use of Colorado River water.

The gentleman from California (Mr. Calvert) has been very supportive of the Salton Sea and has been involved in this issue for well over a decade.

I would like to inquire as to further support of the Salton Sea as part of the CALFED legislative process, and would ask for the gentleman to comment on that.

Mr. CALVERT: Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FILNER: I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. CALVERT: Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his support of the Salton Sea. I would like to assure him that I and many of our Southern California colleagues, including the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. Bono) and certainly the gentleman from California (Mr. Hunter), continue to strongly support the restoration of the Salton Sea, and we will work with him and others in our delegation to continue these efforts.

Mr. FILNER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman and look forward to that work and urge support of the bill.